

# **NEWS Release**

## **USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region**



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### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Aerial Fire Depot**

“We’re planning a fun, active and informative afternoon event at the home of the 73 Missoula Smokejumpers,” said Rodd Richardson, Director of Fire, Aviation and Air for the Forest Service. 2004 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for smokejumping and fire research operations at the Aerial Fire Depot (AFD), located west of the Missoula Airport on West Broadway.

A free community event is planned for this Saturday, June 19 from 1 – 5pm with speakers, tours, displays, historic and current firefighting aircraft, and a demonstration/training smoke jump. Smokey Bear will be on scene.

The dedication of the center’s new mission as the Missoula Fire, Science and Technology Center (MFSTC) begins with a color guard and “scramble” of the smokejumpers at 2pm.

Free bus shuttle from the University’s Adam’s Center Parking Lot begins at noon and runs every 15 minutes until 5pm. The shuttle and parking is courtesy of the National Smokejumpers’ Association. The Association is holding their National reunion in Missoula this weekend.

President Eisenhower provided the keynote speech at the 1954 dedication, attended by an estimated 30,000 people. Information on the historic event, Saturday’s event, and background on how the AFD has grown to include the National Weather Service, the Northern Rockies Fire Training Center, the Northern Rockies Fire Coordination Center and Fire Cache warehouse, and more is available from the website at:

[www.fs.fed.us/r1](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1)

The DC-3 plane used to carry jumpers to the tragic Mann Gulch Fire in August 1949 will be rededicated by the fire’s only living survivor, Bob Sallee. He will be on hand with an estimated 900 former and current smokejumpers.

The Mann Gulch DC-3 is not the only historic plane to be on display for the event. Check out the event website for an idea of the many planes made available by the Museum of Mountain Flying.

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